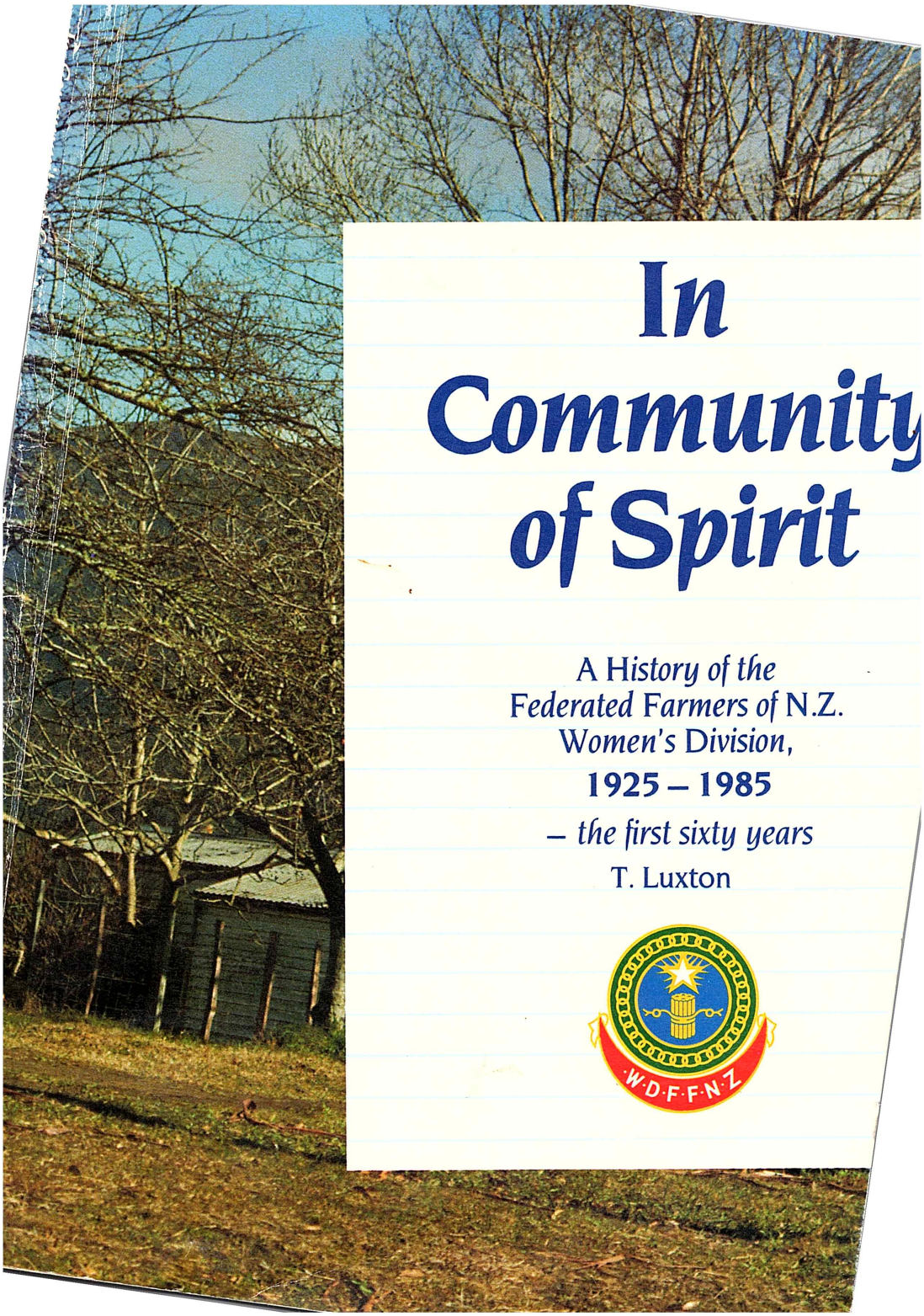

In Community of Spirit

A History of the
Federated Farmers of N.Z.
Women's Division,
1925 – 1985
– the first sixty years

T. Luxton

$8.75

IN COMMUNITY OF SPIRIT

Thelma Luxton

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADFU	Women's Division of Farmers Union
WDFF	Women's Division of Federated Farmers
FF	Federated Farmers
CGC	Country Girls' Club
YFC	Young Farmers Club
CWI	Country Women's Institute
ACWW	Associated Country Women of the World

DOMINION PRESIDENTS

W. J. Polson	1925–29
J. H. Joll (Acting)	1929
C. C. Jackson	1929–33
W. H. Ward	1933–35
C. K. Wilson	1935–37
J. F. Drake	1937–38
J. C. Wickham	1938–39
Noel Adams	1939–42
W. Orr	1942–45
W. Elliott	1945–48
J. R. Haldane	1948–51
M. Jamieson (Coop)	1951–54
N. W. B. Schroder	1954–59
M. Eastwood	1957–60
T. M. Watson (Acting)	1959
T. M. Watson	1960–63
M. E. Irwin	1963–66
J. K. Lees	1966–69
Jean Smith	1969–72
B. Bryant	1972–75
N. Wells	1975–78
V. Tarrant	1978–81
G. Talbot	1981–84
E. McInnes	1984

THE WOMEN'S CREED

'Keep us O God, from pettiness; let us be large in thought, in word, and deed.
'Let us be done with fault-finding and leave off self-seeking.
'May we put away pretence and meet each other face to face without self-pity and without prejudice.
'May we never be hasty in judgement and always be generous.
'Let us take time for all things; make us grow calm, serene, gentle.
'Teach us to put into action and better impulses; straightforward and unafraid.
'Grant that we may realise it is the little things that create differences; that in the big things of life we are one.
'And may we strive to touch and to know the great human heart common to us all, and O Lord God, let us not forget to be kind.'

FOREWORD

I am very privileged to be serving as Dominion President of Women's Division Federation Farmers of New Zealand in this year of our Diamond Jubilee and to follow a line of distinguished women who have been our leaders for 60 years. Each have brought their own special talent to the position whether it be wisdom, vision, inspiration, energy, courage or foresight.

In looking back over the past 60 years we can reflect with pride on the work that has been accomplished, but must not now be content to sit back and rest on our laurels. There will be many challenges and changes ahead of us and we must be prepared to meet them in the years ahead. With still an everlasting scope for our work and with loyal co-operation, there is no limit to the good we can do, provided we remain united.

It is my sincere wish that Women's Division will continue to grow in service by working in Community of Spirit in the days ahead as we have in the past.

ELSIE McINNES
Dominion President

INTRODUCTION

Why did women's rural organisations emerge in New Zealand in the 1920s? New Zealand was just recovering from World War I when economic conditions deteriorated and conditions in the rural society also worsened. The women and children were suffering from lack of facilities, services, and the loneliness of isolation, and the problems that accompany this.

There had been for many years movements which catered for the women of New Zealand society, but they were urban based. Even the NCW was urban based, and logically was more concerned with the environment they understood. Church organisations were also very well supported with the women performing an extension of their homemaking role. In the 1920s there appeared to be a stirring, or an arousing of consciousness, in the rural sector of New Zealand society, as it was during this period that there was a growth in movements which catered for the countrywoman. Women had always been interested in church activities and belonged to such organisations as the Mother's Union and Women's Guilds, which were responsible for the curtains and cushions in the local churches and the wellbeing of the minister and his family. These outlets were not satisfying the needs of the rural women, so it was in the early 1920s that two rural women's organisations appeared.

Miss Elizabeth Jerome Spencer founded the CWI at Omatua Rissington, Hawkes Bay in 1921. Many of the women in country areas had had no experience in taking the initiative so they were unsure of how to handle a new concept which only involved women. It is interesting to see that the CWI appeared to function best in established rural areas, or in rural towns.

WDFU appealed to instincts of the women who could appreciate the problems being experienced. As will be seen WDFU tackled many problems, and provided unique answers throughout its 60 years, but as Ginny Talbot, Dominion President said:

> 'There is a temptation to rest upon our laurels, but can we afford to?
>
> While there are still families and women in particular under stress, lonely, or ill, while there are children lacking in love or opportunity, there is work for us to do. While there are women who do not know their legal rights, who lack the courage to take back faulty goods, or who do not know

where to turn to get wrongs put right, there is work for us to do. Fifty years of service have shown us that together we can perform miracles. We must ensure that our glorious past is a prelude to an even better future, so that some who celebrate this year may also celebrate a centennial of miracles.'

Thanks for help preparing this book go to Dr Margaret Tennant for her long-suffering patience, W. H. Oliver for his inspiration, my husband and family for their understanding treatment of a frustrated writer, also Viv O'Keefe for her hours of typing and special thanks to Teresa Donaldson, WDFF Dominion Secretary, and all the others who supplied information.

CHAPTER ONE

'I liken the WDFF to our famous Kauri Tree, because our roots commenced growing in New Zealand soil'
Laura Ambury
Northern Wairoa Pres. 1939–1958

Women's Division membership has grown up with the myth, that they owe their existence to a man, Mr McAlpine, who addressed a group of women accompanying their husbands to the 1925 Farmers' Union conference. As this myth has been perpetuated in the written literature of the organisation, with the approach of the Golden Jubilee it is now time to reflect on the origins of the myth along with the origins of the organisation. When reading the literature available and attempting to ascertain the foundations of the myth, it is fascinating to find that the first recorded reference is found in 'Martha's' column in the *Farmers' Weekly* who says: 'It was Mr McAlpine who fired the shot that launched the WDFU.'

Mr McAlpine did address the women on 27 July, 1925, in the tearooms of the DIC, but the mythology which has grown up around this address seems to be at odds with the contents of the address as published.

Mr McAlpine's address — Ladies, you probably will conclude that I had some object in asking you to meet me this afternoon. The object is to put the aims and objects of the Union before you. I am convinced that unless we interest the wives and daughters of members, the Union cannot succeed. The women on our farms are fully as much concerned in the results of the farming operations as the men are, and, indeed, the wives feel hardupness more than the men, for no-one knows the wants and requirements of the home and children as the wife and mother does. The average man is so engrossed in his farming operations, continually planning for the farm to make it produce more, that he overlooks the other needs — the needs of the home and family. When the request for the annual subscription to the Union comes along, it is the wife being hard up and not knowing how the Union is working in her interest, who suggests to her husband to cut his membership, whereas if she knew just what the Union has done and is doing for farmers she would see to it that the membership continued. I want you

to realise, ladies, that I am talking from actual experience gained during the last eight years' work. Now, how is the Union working to help the women on the land? I want you to realise that more than 75 per cent of our farmers are exceedingly hard up, caused, in the main, by the high cost of production manures, seeds, living, wages, and that before these things can come down interest must come down. The price of money is the base of the price of everything, and money cost must come down before cost of production, living and wages can come down. Please don't let your judgement be led astray by the city cry of 'Land is too dear.' Why should we accept the dictum of our city friends, who know nothing of our conditions to decry our assets? Why should our assets be the only assets inflated? My view is that everything is too high. The unnecessary increase in the price of money had the effect of putting everything up excepting land values, and as everything went up, naturally land values came down. Now, we have a plan to bring cheaper and easier money within reach of our farmer, viz. the establishment of an Agricultural Bank. New Zealand is one of the few countries of any size in the world which has not its land banking system. We must have money cheaper for our primary producer or he cannot compete successfully in the one market of the world — London.

There are countries which are getting money cheaper than the producers of New Zealand. You ask, will the Agricultural Bank cheapen money? Yes, ladies, it will; we have had proof that we can get ample funds from London at the same price that our Government pays. Mr Polson had an offer of five millions at a price which would have enabled us to lend to the farmer at five and a half per cent, or less. We could not accept the money because we had not the legislation, and we cannot get, or rather will not be given, the legislation until our Union is numerically strong enough to demand the Bill from the Government. That is the reason why we organisers are aiming at a membership of 50,000 — that number being about two-thirds of the farmers of New Zealand.

Now, ladies, the question is how can you help? I suggest that you form a Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union, and if you ladies present will put your will into the movement you can, and indeed I believe you will, before our next general election, have a very strong organisation of many thousands. The object of your division is to secure better conditions in every way for the women on the farms, but may I ask you to specialise, in the first place, by insisting that any candidate for Parliament you vote for must distinctly promise to do all in his power to demand from the Government an Agricultural Banking Bill, the terms of which must be along the lines of, or if possible demand the full, Bill promulgated by our Dominion president, Mr W. J. Polson. You should bring the whole weight of your division to force our Government to give us better conditions for our farmers. I am thankful our women are not tied by old political associations. They can, and I believe will, approach the movement without any hidebound political leanings, and vote only for those candidates who faithfully and definitely promise to give us what the whole country is crying out for — Cheaper Money.

The I suggest that you try to get your business friends to advertise in

our *Farmers' Weekly*. This paper is our official organ, and it is the only means we have of letting our members know just what the Union is doing. At present that paper is not paying its way; many merchants decline to advertise in it because they do not wish us to succeed in our efforts towards co-operative marketing and agricultural banking; but if you will quietly and definitely indicate to your shopkeeper or merchant that your goodwill depends on his goodwill to our movement he will be only too ready to advertise. Also I urge you to get all your friends to become subscribers to the *Farmers' Weekly*, because the larger the circulation the more valuable the advertising becomes and the more easily can you induce the business man to advertise. I also ask all the ladies here or their friends to assist 'Martha' in her able work, by writing articles for the *Farmers' Weekly*, expressing sympathy and appreciation of the endurance and never-failing cheerfulness of the farmers' womenfolk, in the face of the many hardships connected with farm life. These latter are mainly caused by the high cost of money, and can be removed by cheaper money through an Agricultural Bank.

'Martha' who was a columnist for the Women's Pages in the *Farmers' Weekly*, reviewed the address calling it a 'great little address', stressing the fact that the Farmers' Union needed the active co-operation of the women and that betterment of conditions can only be obtained with cheaper money. The final point being the important one as it shows the real purpose of Mr McAlpine's address, that of canvassing for support of the proposed Agricultural Banking Bill. An active women's voice would add weight to the submissions.

Examination of the address shows little concern with the actual conditions of the women and children in the rural areas. He does give passing recognition to the fact that the men are so concerned with the farm that they pay little attention to the 'needs of the home and family'. The formation of a women's sector of Farmers' Union was not necessarily going to improve this as shown by the reports published in the *Farmers' Weekly*, which showed that many men felt that it was not necessary and that the women had enough to do without wasting their time on social activities.

In the address there is a recognition that the women 'are not tied by old political associations' and this would help in any representations made by the new group. Here 'Martha' is also mentioned when Mr McAlpine was discussing how valuable the *Farmers' Weekly* was to the farming community and by supporting 'Martha', the women could help to ensure the continuation of the paper.

It is believed that the women readily accepted the challenge thrown down by Mr McAlpine, but could the impetus have come from

someone else? 'Martha' says 'the result was just like a match to gunpowder, in a minute the division was formed to uphold the policy of the Farmers' Union. Was this a reaction to McAlpine's speech or to her own comments? In *And So We Grew*, it is noted that 'the fact that the credit for suggesting the formation of this unique organisation goes to a man.' Maybe though the credit should be equally shared between Mr McAlpine and Mrs Polson, the former giving the idea official sanction and Mrs Polson, giving the human view.

Evidence points to the possibility that Mrs Polson and 'Martha' were one and the same person. Florence Polson was the first President of WDFU and wife of MP W. J. Polson, and according to Mrs Annette North of Blenheim, who was present at that 'Tea Party', it was Florence Polson who rallied the women with her description of rural conditions. 'The restricted, bare, lonely lives of women working long hours with few household amenities and their need for contact with others', were described by Florence Polson. Mr McAlpine's mentioning of 'Martha's' column helps to reinforce this notion.

Why would 'Martha' have been keen to give Mr McAlpine the credit, opens many avenues. If in fact Florence Polson and 'Martha' were one and the same, by her promoting the myth that a man was responsible for the formation of the WD, it helped overcome early hesitancy from women not used to promoting their own concerns. A front man was therefore important in the early promotion of another rural women's organisation, after all CWI had been formed in 1921 and its progress was slow. By making it appear as if the men of the FU were the instigators of WD it gave an appearance of acceptance and stability to the new group. Assuming that 'Martha' and Florence are one, it possibly was not considered politically expedient for the wife of an MP to appear to be leading the formation of a pressure group, no matter how small.

'Martha' re-enforces the notion that assistance to FU should be of primary importance and that the provision of cheap finance was the answer to the improvement of conditions experienced by many of those living in the countryside. WD was to show that improvements could be achieved with goodwill, persistence and self help.

From humble beginnings involving 25 women, WDFF has grown into an organisation which has lasted for 60 years. Enthusiasm was such in 1925 that recruitment of members enabled the first conference to be called in 1926, where the Aims and Objects were formulated

and the Constitution introduced, ratification occurring in 1927. At this initial conference the notion was that the women would be active in the political arena, but would not be party political. Vigorous activity followed the 1926 conference with those attending determined to expand the organisation building on the untiring efforts of Mabel Jackson, first Secretary, who had written 2,000 letters during 1925–26, to individual women.

Kopuaranga *12 January 1926*
Wairarapa
Dear Mrs Aston,

Last year, in July, the farmers' wives who were in Wellington at the time of the Farmers' Union Conference decides [sic] *to form an association to take up matters affecting the welfare of women and children. Just at present we are only at the beginning of things but we hope every woman will join up so as to bring pleasure and interest within reach of many. So many women have been shut away from outside interests until their lives have been narrowed down to the daily round of small interests in their home, their children and their neighbours. We wish to promote wider interests to get women to realise how great is — their power for good, their privilege to help, not only their neighbours, but their country. Doubtless you have read in the* Farmers' Weekly *our aims and objects and many articles concerning our movement. We are 'out' to get cheaper money, help in the homes, legislation to get maternity homes more plentiful, better nursing conditions and cheaper, go into cost of living, better educational facilities for country children, medical and dental attention same as city schools. We hope to send books, magazines, patterns of clothes etc to any of our women sympathisers. Will you become a member (2/6 per year) and help our organisation?*

A reply will greatly assist us in our efforts.
I am
Yours sincerely
N. Mabel Jackson (Mrs C. C. Jackson)

Not only were so many women personally contacted but also many individual branches of the Farmers' Union. The reaction of these groups of men varies, with some being very supportive and giving grants to help establish WDFU, and others being openly scathing.

New Zealand Veterinary Association (Inc)

President's Award

Presented to Womens Division Federated Farmers

for meritorious service to veterinary science bringing honour to the recipient and the profession

President (NZVA) R Jackson

Date 12-2-80

This is very evident in the branch reports in *Farmers' Weekly* where the following is noted; remembering that these reports are actually written by the men themselves.

> We had our little bit of fun with that letter and went on to serious business . . . My wife has too much to do to be bothered with such nonsense . . . The women do meet when they get our meeting lunches and that's enough . . . We will humour them . . . Let them have their heads, it will only last a short time.

CHAPTER TWO

For a fledgling organisation the women were very determined in their cause to improve conditions in the rural areas. With the calling of their first Conference in 1926, just 12 months after inception, the women demonstrated their determination. Only one year later saw the ratification of the Constitution and the adoption of the Aims and Objects which were to form the framework for the work of the organisation.

The first set of Aims clearly expounded the feelings of the women and covered 16 detailed points:

(a) To strengthen the Farmers' Union, as it is only by the co-operation of both country men and women that this can be permanently and successfully achieved.

(b) To better the conditions of women and children living on the land, and to improve the conditions of rural life generally.

(c) To improve the medical and nursing facilities for country women.

(d) To secure more domestic help on farms.

(e) To obtain visiting help or housekeepers.

(f) To provide Rest Rooms in country towns.

(g) To improve the schooling for country children.

(h) To secure more frequent medical and dental inspection in country schools.

(i) To improve conditions of migration.

(j) To brighten the lives of all junior migrants to the Dominion, working on the land.

(k) To develop a community spirit and encourage the ideals of Good Citizenship.

(l) To promote the welfare of the Home, Country and the Empire.

(m) To promote harmony between farmers and their employees.

(n) To promote social intercourse, and the study of social questions bearing on the interests of the farming community.

(o) To maintain a vigilant watch on all legislative measures brought before Parliament affecting country women, and to protest against such measures as are deemed injurious to their interests.

(p) To endeavour to secure a Home Science Department at the University and Agricultural Colleges to enable country women to receive instruction in dressmaking, millinery, bottling and preserving fruits, and domestic arts, together with lectures and demonstrations on public health, child welfare, prevention of disease, etc.

When closely examined it appears that many areas overlap and could be considered surplus. But it appears that those involved felt so strongly that all they were aiming for should be clearly stated, that this full list was important.

To implement these aims the women needed a stable base and this was provided by the constitution which set down the terms of membership, the role of Dominion Council, and the steps in Administration. As with any set of rules it was restricting and at times frustrating to the members, and every Conference saw some alteration to the wording. It was decided in 1976 that the Constitution would be completely revised and in 1984 the final draft was completed. Eight years appears a very long time when it is remembered that the original document only took two years from inception to ratification. With all the alterations and nuances in the language used the proposed document has been subjected to very close scrutiny, not only by the members, but also by their legal advisers. Conference is the only body which can sanction alterations and as other matters take precedent the time which is spent on discussion is limited.

Condensation of the Aims and Objects from 16 points to 3 occurred in 1985. They now read:

(a) To better the conditions of women and children living in the country.

(b) To strengthen the Federated Farmers, as it is only by the co-operation of both men and women that Object (a) can be permanently achieved.

(c) To foster and encourage any efforts made in the selection of suitable migrants to the Dominion, and to brighten the lives of all juniors working on the land.

This change effectively says all that the original 16 points did, but, in general not specific terms.

Why the need for condensation? To understand why, the Aims will be examined separately.

To strengthen the Farmers' Union, as it is only by the co-operation that this can be achieved. This aim was given pride of place in 1926, but with the revision it became number two, as it has long been recognised that the primary aim of WD must be the improvement of conditions for rural women and children. Co-operation was essential but not of primary importance. WD had found that they could influence change in their own right. With the FU being a politically orientated organisation many of their moves involved political alignment which was foreign to WD.

Improvement of conditions of women and children in rural areas was recognised as of primary importance very early and the work of WD revolved around this premise. In 1958 this basic idea was promoted to the number one aim.

Medical and nursing facilities were very sparse in 1926 and WD immediately elevated this by employing Bush Nurses, who were the forerunners to the District Nursing Scheme, which has benefited many rural areas. Members were also very active in urging the establishment of small country hospitals and maternity annexes. Dominion Council was very active in promoting this idea and were gratified to see many small hospitals opened or extended. In 1984 this aim could easily be reinstated as once again medical facilities are sparse as many local hospitals are being closed and centralisation occurs.

The need for domestic help was very real in 1926 with so many women involved in the daily running of the farm. It was recognised that many women required this form of help and WD actively supported the recruitment and training of help. In the first decade they helped train young English migrants at Flock House and then Maori girls were trained at Kainga Moe, while in the South Island at Stratheona trainees were also taken. Kainga Moe ceased training in 1954 when the home was burnt down and the final trainees left Stratheona in 1962. In the 1980s after a long period of inactivity in this field WD once again became involved with domestic training, this time in conjunction with the Labour Department at Rotorua. Girls trained under this scheme receive thorough training in child minding, first aid, cooking, housekeeping, care of the elderly and at the

conclusion of the course those completing are presented with certificates. This current scheme has attracted mainly Maori girls, but appears to be successful. With all training schemes the object is to fulfil a need. With the advent of high unemployment in the 1980s possibly the greatest need is to promote the awareness of self confidence and self esteem. If by offering domestic training courses this is achieved then one very useful purpose has been fulfilled.

Provision of housekeepers has been fully explored in Chapter 3. The Housekeeping philosophy is so entrenched in the work of WD that it no longer needs a separate statement.

Where could women visiting towns rest and revive? In 1926 there were very few facilities provided so that the provision of Rest Rooms was of concern. To overcome this the WD actively canvassed local bodies and other organisations for support for the establishment of these rooms. The women raised money to help erect rooms and worked with any group which could help. Many of the Rest Rooms were established in conjunction with the Plunket Society thereby helping to fulfil aim (c), the provision of medical and nursing services. A number of branches built their own rooms which also serve as meeting rooms.

Schooling was always important and the establishment of improved conditions for the children of primary concern. Many changes have occurred in rural schooling over the 30 years between 1926–1956 that any concerns could be now embodied in (a) and (b) of the revised Aims. During the years the WD had seen improvements to the Correspondence School, the provision of itinerant teachers, a school boarding allowance and an increase in secondary school hostel accommodation. Establishment of local rural secondary schools gained momentum especially after the second world war, but many rural parents did not always patronise the smaller school as they erroneously believed that the education was inferior. Those who could afford it sent their secondary age children to boarding schools. To assist members educate their children a system of bursaries has been established such as the Schroder Bursary, Waikato WDFF Bursary, as well as many local polytechnic Bursaries granted by Provincials.

Improvement in medical and dental inspections was needed. These improvements were part of urban education but not rural. In the initial stages the women asked for rural children to be included in existing schemes. Even endeavouring to take the children to the services.

This was unsatisfactory for the busy country women and WD agitated for rural services. Services were quite often provided by the women on their own initiative such as contracting a visiting dentist or arranging a surgery for a visiting doctor. With the employment of school doctors and nurses by the Health Department, better inspection facilities were provided. Unfortunately this service was discontinued in the 1970s and once again WD is campaigning for its re-introduction under Aim (a).

Immigration provided the very essential labour for New Zealand farmers and was seen in 1926 as the answer. The New Zealand Sheepowners had tackled this by establishing the Flock House Training Schools for children of deceased British Merchant Seamen. WD took over the mothering of these immigrants. It is interesting to see that in 1958 there was still a need to promote immigration and it is even more congruous that in 1985 the third aim still remains. The following Aim, that of brightening the lives of junior migrants is a direct consequence of this one.

Good citizenship and the development of community spirit is embodied in the work of WD. It was envisaged that by developing a community spirit that the younger members of rural society would elect to stay and not move to the expanding urban areas. By the formation of branches a focal point was provided thus giving the opportunities for lectures and discussions on ways to develop these aims.

Promotion of the welfare of Home, Country and Empire carries on from the previous stated Aim. By improving the conditions of rural society the promotion of this aim was a consequence. The addition of the Empire allowed members to promote concerns for others in other countries. This led to the WD helping to form a Pan Pacific Organisation and joining ACWW.

Harmony between farmers and their employees was of concern, as there appeared to be little interaction socially between the two groups. Membership of WD was open to all women in the rural area and this allowed the women to meet socially therefore helping to break down barriers.

Social intercourse was a consequence of the previous Aim with many branches arranging dances, card evenings and socials with remarkable success until after the war. From the 1950s onwards this form of entertainment slowly died, though the occasional special effort is still made.

Though the Aim stating that a watch would be kept on legislative

measures appears well down on the list, it was the first concerted action of the organisation and with the implementation of the Legislative Committee this Aim has been embodied in the everyday working of the organisation. Some of the areas where they have been successful have been appeal for reduction of death duties, implementation of tractor safety regulations, jury service for women, 24-hour notice of prisoners on bail, hydatids control, TB testing of dairy herds, Matrimonial Property Act and Registration of Nurses.

The final statement to secure a Home Science Department was felt to be very essential to the education of women, an education necessary to improve conditions in rural life. Members actively lobbied for a Home Science Department which was established at Otago University. Also they were involved in the establishment of Adult Education Extension classes, WEA, Girls Educational Weeks and Co-ordinating Committees with CWI. Many of these bodies provided lecturer's lecture boxes which enabled individual branches to study at their own pace, and courses to help improve the countrywoman's knowledge. Many branches took advantage of these opportunities given by these Extension departments.

By steadily and quietly working WD has managed to fulfil the 16 Objectives stated in 1927. The changes have not been radical or even startling but they have been steady. Unfortunately this type of progress does not always appeal to the younger women of the 1980s, so that they form their own groups, as it is easier to form a new organisation than to change an existing one.

No organisation should live on its achievements but should grow and change. An example of the organisation's involvement, reflecting their concern for the larger community, was shown in the membership participation in the 1970s in the *Survey of Rural Women*. This survey has since formed the basis for ongoing discussion and subsequent policy statements. By altering the emphasis of these Aims WD has shown they are prepared to change.

CHAPTER THREE

'It has brought the outstretched hand to aid those in need not only materially but spiritually. This is a proud heritage to hand our future generations'.
Jean Smith, Dominion President

Many aims of the organisation specifically deal with the conditions faced by many of the women and children in the rural areas of New Zealand, during the 1920s. Of these, Aims number (e) was to 'obtain visiting help or housekeepers'. This was soon to be a focal point of the new organisation in 1926 and a focus which is still relevant in the 1980s.

In her address to the women in 1925, Florence Polson outlined some of the privations suffered by many rural women, and it could be assumed that even some of those women who were present, could have also undergone some of those trials, as conditions for many women in rural society were harsh with isolation playing a major factor when combined with prevailing conditions. By 1927 the Women's Division had decided to alleviate these conditions and a starting point was agreed upon. It was recognised the greatest need belonged to the mothers in the home who were suffering from ill health or overwork. One way in which this malaise could be relieved was by the provision of housekeepers and bush nurses. These capable women would take over the mother's role while she was absent. The reasons for requiring a housekeeper or nurse ranged from giving the mother a holiday, help during confinement, to helping a 'nerve stricken' women. It is not known if the incidence of these women was higher in rural than urban New Zealand, but WD were concerned for those they could help.

Ill-health is still the most common cause for application for assistance in the 1980s, but now the housekeeper may be employed to prevent an emergency. This is a subtle change in emphasis. The recognition that women need time away from the stress of the family has greatly assisted in this change.

Though the scheme is still in existence there appears to be little public knowledge about the scheme, and one would suspect that many members of the WD also have the wrong conception. Jean Hill, Housekeeping Secretary of the Hawkes Bay Provincial, remarked that the only public knowledge of the scheme comes from word of mouth or by referral of a social agency. Jean says, 'the scheme should be better publicised, it should be shouted from the roof tops'. By extending into the wider community the scheme shows strength gained from years of caring.

Not only was help available in the home but holidays away were catered for through the Rest Home system. These were homes established throughout New Zealand where rural women and others in need, could go to regain their health. They were lovely old homes surrounded by gardens where the women were pampered. The only rule concerned breakfast in bed. It was compulsory. Before WDFU acquired their permanent homes, private houses were registered as Rest Homes. In 1935 there were 12 such homes.

The first home was established at Kainga Moe, Palmerston North, in 1935 after much discussion. This home fulfilled a double role, that of a Rest Home and a training establishment for domestics. In the 15 years up to 1950 Miss Salisbury had trained over 40 girls. A domestic training scheme on similar lines has been run in conjunction with the Labour Department in Rotorua in the 1980s. Kainga Moe was used until destroyed by fire during renovations in 1954. At Stratheona, a training school to train Junior Housekeepers was being run in the South Island.

Other homes were Melrose in Nelson, held in trust for the Nelson City Council; Te Kiteroa in Waimate, and Scotlands in Auckland. Other properties owned by WD were their Headquarters in Hawkestone Street and Honda left to the organisation by Dr Agnes Bennett. Eventually this was sold and the money used to purchase property in Hawkestone Street giving WD permanent Headquarters and Clubrooms Honda, where members can meet or stay. Harris Cottage, Strathmore Bay, was also left to WD as a Holiday Cottage.

Four rest homes were operating by 1950 and were very well patronised. These homes filled a very real need for all those concerned and were open to any woman requiring care. As with many schemes the function of the Rest Homes changed during the relatively affluent decades of the 1950s and 1960s. When Kainga Moe was destroyed

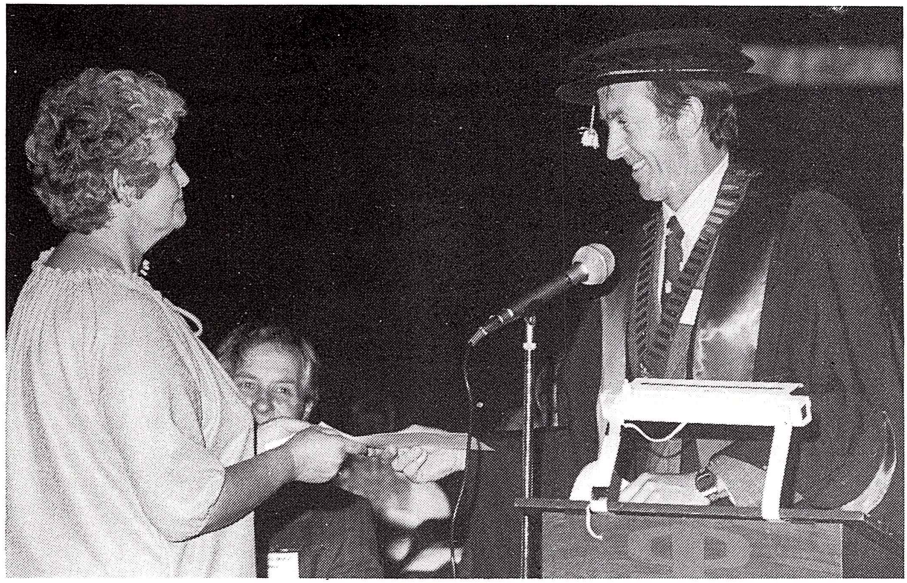
it was not replaced. It became increasingly evident in the late 1960s that the homes were becoming a liability and successive conferences discussed the problem. Honda had been used to purchase the club rooms. Disposing of Melrose was simple. As a trust it was returned to the Nelson City Council, but Te Kiteroa and Scotlands posed a dilemma. After much discussion and investigation the homes were sold and the monies invested in the Scotland, Te Kiteroa WDFF Charitable Trust Inc. and at Conference 1984 the first report was tabled. They have $310,000 invested, of which the WD received three per cent interest and the rest is distributed through grants. The first grants covered finance for seminars, assistance to tertiary students, adult reading schemes, medical fees, repairs to buildings and for disabled persons. Grants totalling $21,515 were distributed from the first year's investment.

WD are fulfilling a need relevant to the 80s with the sale of the Rest Homes, as the homes themselves fulfilled in the 1940–60s. The emphasis is still on help for the rural women and children and a concern for their welfare but it manifests itself in another form.

Life in rural society in New Zealand has had its highs and lows over the past 60 years, with depressions, war and rising affluence. WD, through its moral and social attitudes, has helped to relieve the depressed periods experienced. Their work has been more pronounced during these times than during the periods of affluence. Calls on their assistance have always been answered to the best of their ability. They have not tried to cure all the ills caused by economic and social conditions but have aimed to help those they can. Women in need are treated as individuals and helped as such and not as statistics.

As such, the Housekeeping Scheme is still very relevant and this is shown in the total number of weeks worked by housekeepers, an increase of 554 weeks in 1926 to 2480 weeks in 1983–84. Reasons for the calls on the housekeeper cover a wider range than they did in 1927 with services being required for depression cases, stress, multiple births, solo parents, post operative care, cancer cases and more elderly being cared for in their homes. In 1984 the Administrator also voiced in her Report other avenues in which the scheme could be extended, among them assistance for long term cases, day care, heavy duties such as windows and spring cleaning; at risk cases; night duty; child or adult sitting and gardening. All these ideas are to be investigated.

The ability to change and adapt has shown itself in these alterations



Mrs Val Tarrant receiving the N.Z. Veterinary Association President's Award from Association President, Mr R. Jackson.

New Zealand Associated Country Women of the World delegation to Germany, 1980.

and brings WD into the main stream of late twentieth century life.

Depression and the lack of funds which accompany the phenomenon did not give rural dwellers extra cash to be spent on housekeepers, but over the past 60 years this has not inhibited the movement. Those requiring help paid what they could afford, and nothing if they could not afford help. The balance was paid by WDFF from Community Chest, a fund established in 1927 with the Housekeeping Scheme. Monies needed were supplied by the branches and in 1985 this system is still in operation. Any appeals for funds have been smartly answered and as such the Chest is still a very important recipient of branch funds.

A grant from the Health Department also supplements the Community Chest revenues; this was hard won by the organisation. In the early years the government handed out annual grants, but the amount varied. The success of the Housekeeping Scheme encouraged the Labour Government in the early 1940s to set up a scheme of their own, but it was soon realised that the voluntary work component in the WDFF scheme was very important to its functioning and the WDFF Housekeeping Scheme became accredited to the Health Department thereby guaranteeing permanent assistance. This is given in the form of a subsidy on wages.

Through the Community Chest all members can participate in this very important work. It is very necessary for those who need to avail themselves of a housekeeper to have peace of mind regarding finances and every member can ensure this by continuing the support given over the past 60 years.

CHAPTER FOUR

Helen Wilson, Dominion President 1935-1937, remarked that — In my opinion the best work accomplished by the WD (always excepting the Housekeeping Scheme) has been political, 'keeping a watchful eye on legislation', protesting against that which we considered harmful and agitating for that which we thought beneficial to country conditions. To learn how well that was carried out, one has only to look over the agendas and remits of our earlier years to find that practically every request we made to a Minister has since been granted.

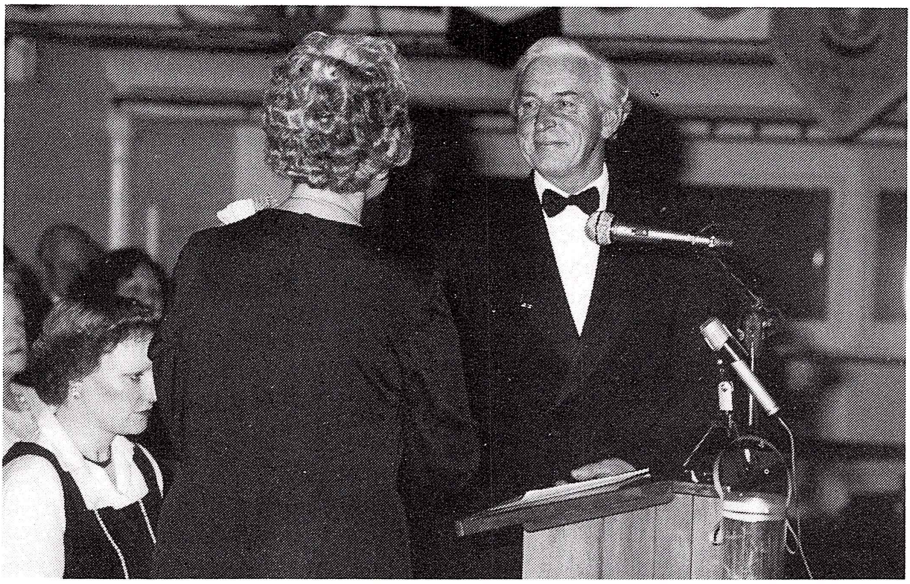
This statement is not entirely factual as not every request has been granted, but a remarkable number have been. Members have supported the FU when necessary and have been very active in any areas which affect rural women and children. To press their view the women continually reiterated that they were non-party political and this has been reaffirmed at conferences during the past 60 years.

Dominion Executive has maintained contact with Government Departments and Ministers of the Crown, its influence being reflected in the weight its opinion carries. This is shown by the invitations extended to the organisation to be represented on various committees and boards. If there is one claim that can be made on Mr McAlpine's behalf, it is, that by asking for help on behalf of FF he spurred the women into action to help improve their own conditions. By introducing them to the mechanics of making submissions, he started a process which is now formalised in the Legislative Committee, made up of members appointed by the Dominion Executive, who peruse any proposed legislation or alterations to the laws of New Zealand. They go into these proposals very thoroughly making recommendations.

Throughout the past 60 years many of the concerns of WDFF have been allayed but as one concern was rectified another took its place. Early in its existence the Division highlighted differences between urban and rural facilities. This is shown by the early call for the same dental treatment for rural children as that provided by the government for those in urban areas. It took a number of years before this inequality was resolved and even then many children required a day absent from school to receive basic treatment. All remits carried at Conference were passed on to the appropriate authority for their consideration and then the recommendation were distributed amongst the membership. Many topics discussed were not sensational, but were concerned with the basic necessities of life. Areas covered ranged from standardisation of shoe and clothing sizes, conditions in school rooms, dental and medical concerns, bus services, acquiring reliable electricity and transport services, better manufacturing, and the plight of women and children.

As New Zealand moved out of the Depression of the 1930s it moved towards war. Concern about defence issues had arisen as early as 1930, when members were asked to consider the question of military training. By 1939 the shadow of war brought a stronger reaction from the women. When they discussed the formation of a Land Army, they felt many women were already doing this. By the end of 1940 many women were keeping the farms going and involving themselves in community war efforts, such as Red Cross, church committees and local war efforts committees.

Rural education was a constant concern in Conference remits, much time being devoted to the correspondence school system. This recurring topic was responsible for improvements in conditions both for the school and the pupils, but one aspect of correspondence education which is still unsolved, is that of remuneration for the mainly untrained teaching mothers. This debate was still going on at Conference in 1984, when members voiced the need for support for mothers, and many of those concerned voicing the opinion that though the money was not essential to enable them to supervise their children, it would help to give them a feeling of worth and not the feeling that they were being used. It was claimed that cost of schooling a child by correspondence is only one-third of that of standard education. Concerns at adequate supervision of buses and playgrounds also regularly appear in remits.



Professor Sir William Liley of the Committee for Cot Death Research receiving a cheque for $70,000.

Mrs B. Stephens of the ACWW with Cathy Saunders of the New Zealand Dairy Board.

Examinations were even a contentious subject in 1938 as they 'affect the child's nervous system', an argument still being propounded in 1984.

One remit, which had the desired effect and was passed in 1936, expressed concern at the lack of proper conveniences at railway stations for women and children. Rest rooms were eventually established at all railway stations, with Wellington railway station employing a hostess to assist the travelling public. WD supported and assisted the hostess whenever possible.

Employment of women police officers was of concern to the members in 1934 when conference urged them to contact their MPs urging them to support the Bill when presented. It was a reflection of the women's concern for women and children which led to this call.

At the Conference in 1945 the members discussed a total of 45 remits dealing principally with health and education. One practical result was an approach to the Standards Institute urging the standardisation of footwear sizes which resulted in manufacturers making use of the Standard Mark.

The war years produced a community feeling which culminated in the magnificent fundraising effort to purchase a Spitfire aircraft for the RAF. During a very short period of six weeks in 1940 the membership raised 5,000 pounds for the purchase which was piloted by a son of a Levin member, FH Lieut. L. P. Griffith, DFC. Buying a Spitfire was a notion of Mrs Noel Adams, Dominion President and the response was spontaneous.

To help facilitate their non-political stance WD has accepted their responsibilities by joining many organisations and committees. They are represented on FF and when asked give the 'woman's view' of the problem under discussion. Any suggestions or ideas are listened to, but the wives of farmers still have no rights at FF meetings. In contrast on other bodies representatives are integral partners. In 60 years they have served as full members on many committees including the War Relief Association; Committee of Enquiry, re Abortion, 1938; Road Safety Council; Consumer Council; Committee on Women; Education Working Committee; Conservation Committee; Women in Agriculture; and Society for Research on Women in New Zealand, 1966.

Not only did the women involve themselves in national concerns they also actively involved themselves in local affairs. One such campaign was that of providing rest rooms where rural women could tend

to young children and relax when visiting town. Their visits to town involved a full day trip and without these rooms were very harrowing. Not only did they urge local bodies to provide this necessity, but the women also worked towards these ends themselves.

In 1973 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee, the members elected to raise finance for research into Leptospirosis, a disease which leaves the sufferer ill for long periods of time. The fundraising was instituted in 1973 and by 1975 at the Golden Jubilee Conference, the fund stood at $29,761.38. When the official fund raising ceased on 31 March 1976, the total stood at $35,574.08.

Massey University's Faculty of Veterinary Science were the recipients of the grant and established a three-year Research Fellowship. 1979 Conference heard Dr Roger Marshall read Professor David Blackmore's report, thanking all 'for providing the facilities for all this exciting work.' In conjunction with Wellcome Industries a vaccine, to help eradicate disease, was launched in the Waikato in 1979. Professor Blackmore stated 'that it appeared control programmes were theoretically possible, but work is still needed to study the situation'. This plea was heard by the women attending Conference in 1984, in Palmerston North, when they were deliberating their Diamond Jubilee Project. Once again funds will be raised to allow continuation of this research.

In 1980, in view of the success of the Leptospirosis appeal, members very willingly started fundraising again, this time to assist research in Cot Death Syndrome. A cheque for $70,000 was handed to the Committee for Cot Death Research.

In 1981 former Labour Prime Minister Sir Wallace Rowling addressed Conference and remarked 'that now rural women have decided they have had enough they are telling the decision-makers they want some action. By sheer intensity of community concern they are making the future of rural communities.' At the same conference Social Credit Party MP Mr Bruce Beetham said that 'WDFF has played an important role in our society over the years, but I feel it can and should play an even greater role in the future.'

WD has to take up the challenge which these two leaders have offered. To ensure that the organisation survives, members must re-evaluate their position and the strategy of the organisation. They must intensify their efforts not only to affect change but to make sure that their membership expands and to achieve this the ideology of WD has to be strengthened and updated.

CHAPTER FIVE

This branch is to serve as an illustration of the many branches which form the wider organisation. Mokau-Awakino is a branch serving a remote area which typifies the activities and interests of rural women. Mokau and Awakino are twin settlements established on river banks, six miles apart, on the western coastline of the North Island.

On 28 February 1932, the first meeting was called in the district. Fifteen women attended that meeting and the branch was formed. Membership grew quickly, peaking at 67 in 1949. This high membership was retained over the next decade but from the 1960s slowly declined to the point where in 1974 disbandment was discussed, but the prevailing feeling was that the organisation was worth preserving. Meeting times and places were changed to accommodate the members, thus ensuring the continued life of the branch. In the 1980s the branch is once again slowly growing. The ideals of community help and understanding are once again finding a place. This is possibly a reflection of the results of economic conditions in New Zealand which brought about an erosion in rural services earlier provided, such as a local policeman, visiting doctors and health nurses, dwindling commercial services and closure of small hospitals. These now are catalysts for the rural women.

In the branch's first year the members, though very isolated themselves, answered the call for assistance for needy families. The year 1983 saw the members discussing 'what the branch might do to help necessitous cases in the district'. They collected clothing and food for distribution and with the outbreak of war in 1939 the branch fully committed themselves to the war effort, one example being the numerous articles knitted by the women from wool provided by the women in New Plymouth. Anne Sutton recorded the following in 1942:

The following articles were knitted by members, 78 scarves, 114 balaclavas, 42 pair mittens, 10 pair socks, 5 pullovers, 3 seamen's jerseys. The following articles were made for the Merchant Navy: 51 flannel scarves, 1 peggy square quilt, 6 wool eiderdowns, 6 balaclavas and jerseys. A spinner has been purchased by the branch and several farmers have donated fleeces. The wool spun is to be knitted up for the men of the Merchant Navy.

Not only did the branch commit itself to knitting, but it also provided food parcels for the 'local boys' overseas. Members' war relief efforts, did not end with the war, but continued until 1952 with the collection and dispatch of fat, food and clothing for England. The details of one of the parcels sent in August 1948 was '5 lbs fat, 3 lbs honey, 1 tin milk, 1 tin cheese, 2 lots of soap'. Parcels were made up from goods collected in the district and were despatched either to a collection centre or individually addressed. In 1948, 46 parcels were sent.

The year 1951 once again saw the women packing food and clothing parcels for soldiers, this time, for those fighting in Korea. For many years the branch supported the appeal for the Makogai Leper Colony in the Pacific, continuing this work until the late 1960s. June Opie, a member's daughter, who contracted poliomyelitis while visiting England was also supported, as were the children in a Polish orphanage.

A new thrust in international aid was started in 1966, when after a talk illustrating the appalling conditions in some Asian areas, the members discussed the means by which money could be raised for Save the Children Fund (SCF) and they adopted a child for a year, the first child being six year old Guen Glu Kee. By April 1971, the last sponsored child was working and as the branch had not been allocated another child they decided that in future they would help by giving a donation to SCF.

The impetus created by wartime activities carried over into local activities. Division gave rural women a purposeful role in their local communities especially where the interests of women and children were involved. Whenever any local matter arose which involved the women or children of the district the branch actively involved itself, by calling meetings and preparing evidence. One example of this was when the bus company proposed to alter the timetable to enable better coverage for secondary children attending the High School, 40 miles away. This alteration entailed some sacrifice by the community but was agreed to.

Members kept a watchful eye on the local health services complaining to the Health Department when the district was left without a nurse, and when the service was threatened in 1958 the branch actively campaigned for reconsideration. The same reaction occurred whenever the suggestion arose of shifting the local policeman.

They not only supported the need for these services but assisted when needed in maintaining these services. The branch provided equipment and was the collection agency when funds were needed. They provided for the furnishing of rooms in 1969 when a doctor from Piopio held a clinic once a week.

Throughout their history the Mokau-Awakino branch has involved the local community in much of its activities. Whenever it had a speaker, demonstrator or entertainment suitable for others the community has been included. The pupils of the local primary schools have regularly been invited to join the branch and for many years the branch successfully ran an Annual Show Day for the schools. Originally it was solely agricultural but expanded to include floral work, arts and crafts. They arranged the programme, facilities and judges for these days. A feature of the branch's concern for the local community manifested itself in special days, such as the Honouring of Age and Christmas. The former was originally for the women of the district but in 1959 it was extended to include the men. Those attending were presented with cakes, or in latter years, biscuits. Also, in 1959 their concern for the elderly took a practical turn when the members visited them and took them on outings. This could only be carried out while branch membership remained relatively high. With the decline in membership this service faded, but not the annual Honouring of the Age Day.

The branch had a good working relationship with Federated Farmers and were prepared to back them when required. Its members also exchanged regular visits with the Maori Women's Welfare League, catered for the Dog Trials and provided lunch for Anzac Day participants. Fostering of good relations was also carried out by donations of prizes to various groups in the district. This working together benefited both the organisation and the community.

The branch supported the WD's work through donations to national schemes such as the Community Chest, Rest Homes, Housekeeping Scheme, Leptospirosis Appeal, Cot Death Appeal, North Taranaki Holiday Cottage, homes for the elderly, the blind,

Dominion President Miss Jean Smith and Mrs Val Tarrant with the $12,000 cheque raised as part of the U.N. Decade of Clean Water and Sanitation.

Southland Inter-Provincials and their forestry scheme to raise funds for WDFF in Southland.

the IHC, Crippled Children and many other causes. All appeals struck a responsive note. Members also used the branch as a social outlet and went on outings, picnics, barbecues, enjoyable Christmas parties and in common with all branches showed off their skills in flower shows and displays of work. These are still important to the social aspect of the branch, but as with other factors have undergone modifications.

As with other branches Mokau-Awakino concerned itself with wider issues affecting women and children and in 1949, the branch debated the following remits and submitted them to Conference:

1. That in view of the number of brutal assaults on women and children and of murders committed, women's organisations be asked to press that the life sentence shall be for as long as the culprit shall live.

2. That as a deterrent against brutal assaults on women and children, women's organisations be asked to press for the reinstatement of corporal punishment.

Both remits were carried at the 1950 Annual Conference.

Highlights for the members of the Mokau-Awakino Branch were visits from various Dominion Presidents, sister branches, Provincials and playing hostess to district activities. Members not only took their social activities seriously, but also the affairs of WD and this is illustrated in the efforts made by members to attend Provincial. To take part in Provincial affairs the members of this branch had to stay overnight. For members of other outlying branches this form of meeting attendance was everyday. The structure of the Provincials encouraged all branches to participate and Mokau-Awakino was no exception. In 1954 Philomenia Black was elected Provincial President and during the past 50 years the branch has had regular representation on the Provincial Executive. As with all branches the Annual Conferences were yearly highlights and if possible a member was sent to represent them. When not possible they ensured that the branch was represented by proxy. All those members who attended conference were filled with enthusiasm when they returned. Continually in the minutes reference is made to the benefits gained by attending conference.

Active branch participation in WDFF affairs is very crucial to the wellbeing of the organisation. Local and individual concerns are important, but so are the Provincial, National and International ones. Co-operation, consideration and service form the nucleus of the ideology of WDFF and it is at branch level that this is readily observed.

CHAPTER SIX

There are three tiers to the organisation structure of the WDFF; they are branch, provincial and national. The branch level has been illustrated in the previous chapter with a look at Mokau-Awakino Branch. With the rapid growth in membership during the first six years, it was soon realised that the members needed another forum other than conference, and this was provided by establishing Provincials in 1932. These were formed by branches within a region gathering together to elect an executive which would be responsible for administering the organisation within that area. In the formative years the presidents of the Provincials were an integral part of the National Executive attending two meetings a year, one prior to conference and one during the year. This has changed since 1950 when inter-provincial conferences became the norm. At these conferences not only the presidents attend but also branch members, thereby giving a wide viewpoint to any questions debated.

With the formation of the Provincials, the branches, who were represented by three members, had a forum to act as a catalyst for opinions and views of the membership. Problems and concerns are discussed thereby enabling the women to implement their aims and objects in a more forceful manner. Branches were primarily concerned with their own local areas and were able to translate this feeling to a wider sphere by working in concert with others. As a central pivot the Provincial is able to co-ordinate the local branches and facilitate the work undertaken at a local level. All Provincials eventually ran their own Housekeeping Schemes, fulfilling a crying need in rural life. They also ran hospital visiting schemes whereby members who were hospitalised were visited. In some areas this was carried further with the provision of chattels for local hospitals and setting up of hostels

such as Karamu House in Hamilton. This hostel caters for the elderly in a residence home, on short stay visits. This allows family to have a rest or a holiday and the elderly can be looked after in comfort. The neighbouring Provincials in the Waikato have all helped with this project which was first mooted in 1953, finally reaching fruition in 1967 with the opening of Karamu House, allowing 12 guests to stay for up to three weeks.

Another hostel venture was the Wharekoa Children's Hostel in the Hawkes Bay. This hostel was opened in 1956 but unfortunately owing to staff shortages was closed in 1961. In 1983 the Provincials of Hawkes Bay started a fund raising project for a hospice. This is to be their Provincial Jubilee Project.

Many of the Provincials started their careers with a very essential project, providing rest rooms for the women in the local towns. A trip to town usually meant a full day away from home, and facilities for women and children were very sparse. All small towns had hotels or clubs which the men could visit, but the women had nothing. This required action by the women who became actively involved in fund raising for rest rooms, quite often in conjunction with the local body or the Plunket Society. When this was not possible the women raised monies for their own buildings which they administer. Many of these rooms have since been expanded or sold to other organisations to share. Whenever Provincials purchase property this cannot be made a charge against the national organisation.

Beside supporting the national rest homes Provincials also provide their own holiday cottages for members. These are in New Plymouth, Stockport House in Nelson, Peggy's Cottage in Foxton (sold in 1972), Mangawhai Heads Beach Cottage at Rodney, Riverton Holiday Home and Caravan Park in Southland which has three cottages, two cabins and 70 points for caravans. This park was established in 1945. Other Provincials established their own rooms with accommodation attached such as Wicksteed House in Wanganui and Joll House in the Hawkes Bay and WDFF Clubrooms at Te Awamutu.

In line with the members concern for education a number provided bursaries for education either at secondary or tertiary levels. These bursaries were in addition to the national ones. This was a practical answer to a never ending concern. Not everyone could be helped but at least someone could be assisted.

Provincials organised show days, speakers, courses of interest and

worked with the CWI. Their involvement did not end there. Representatives were appointed to many local committees such as the YWCA, Aged Concern, local homes, Red Cross, NCW and many other organisations. By being involved in the wider community WDFF is able to increase their sphere of influence. This was very evident during World War II when rural women formed the Land Army to help the war effort. Practical concern and effort were also applied to all appeals for assistance and produced a feeling of community which is still talked about in 1985.

Branches through Provincial have answered many calls on their resources. Whenever help is required the membership has responded; to natural disasters such as the Napier earthquake, Abbotsford, and the Invercargill flooding. Members can be proud of their response.

In Chapter Four, two national appeals were examined, the 'Spitfire Fund' where monies were raised to express the rural women's support of their counterparts under threat, and the Leptospirosis Appeal which touched many of their lives. These two appeals can be directly related to the rural women and their concerns. Many of the other appeals supported by branches and Provincials did not directly relate to rural society but were of concern to women throughout New Zealand society. One of these was the Cot Death Appeal started by the North Taranaki Provincial which was then taken up as a national project. The funds raised were presented for cot death research. This tragic phenomena touches all sectors of society and when WDFF advertised their appeal other organisations joined in the effort. This joint co-operation applied to many of the appeals WDFF was involved in.

Knitting woollen singlets for newborn babies is an appeal which was started in the 1980s as an answer to the Cold Baby Syndrome. Many babies have been recipients of singlets which the members have been busy supplying. Throughout the 60 years of the organisation the members have been actively involved promoting wool and wool products.

Individual Provincials have had their own projects during the past 53 years. These include donations by the Mid Canterbury Provincial of a nebuliser to the physiotherapy department of the local hospital, and a wheelchair for the use of the District Nurses. North Canterbury's concern reached the Solomon Islands with a donation of a Haemoglometer. Kaipara's concern saw the presentation of cellos to

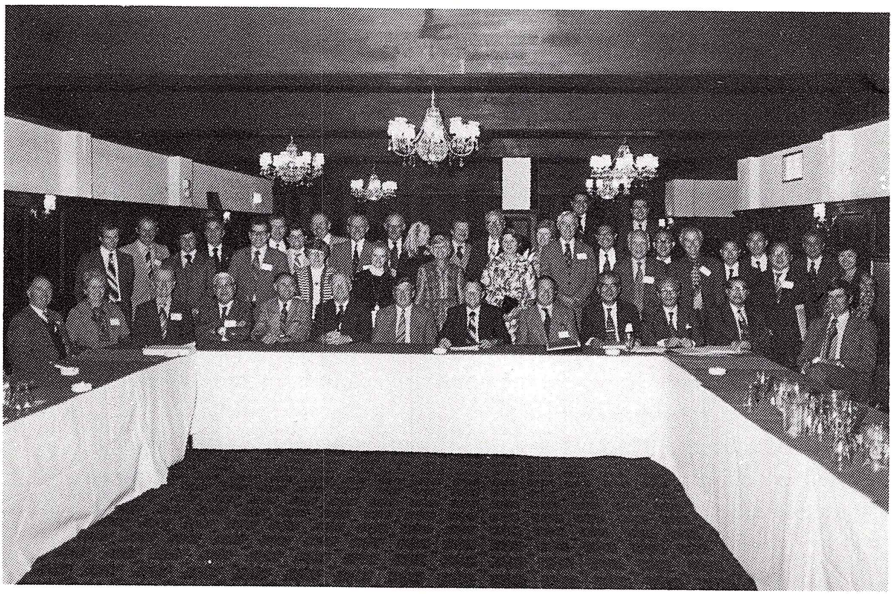
the Kaipara College in the memory of Mrs R. A. Gardiner and a lectern in the memory of Colleen Sheffield.

Medical assistance was given by North King Country with the donation of an audiometer to a doctor's surgery and a baby resuscitator for the local St John Ambulance Brigade. Nelson also assisted in this area with furnishing and maintaining a room attached to the Children's Ward for mothers and also furnished a room in the Obstetric Unit for long-stay mothers. North Otago raised funds for medical equipment, a Diagnostic Scanner, Cot Monitoring Mattress, CAT Scanner and two ripple mattresses. South Taranaki helped raise funds for a Foetal Scanner and Medi-bath for Crippled Children.

All Provincials were involved in the *Madam President Rose* which has been bred to commemorate 50 years of WDFF and many branches and Provincials planted bushes of this rose in local gardens. They now provide a lovely show during the flowering season. Of all the schemes run by Provincials the Inter-Provincials of Southland have the most imaginative one, that of forestry. In 1948 Mr George Hamilton offered a gift of land for tree planting and it was recommended that this leasehold land at a peppercorn rent should be planted out at the rate of 50 acres for four years, a total of 200 acres. The expressed wish of the donor was that the project remain a Southland one with profits being devoted to the work of WDFF in Southland. The vision of 50 acres a year being planted was not realised but steady plantings were undertaken. In 1978 they entered into their first formal agreement for the sale of posts and sawlogs. Now in the 1980s the rewards are being seen.

Many other areas of life were supported by Provincials such as sponsorship of orphans, care of the elderly, local projects and local organisations. Over the past 60 years the Provincials have strengthened within WD. They have not remained static or unchanged but have grown, split and generally multiplied. Some have become extinct as changes have occurred in New Zealand society and its needs have changed, also the emphasis of concern has altered. With the sale of the rest homes the continual need for support in the form of finance and goods are no longer required, so that much of the previous emphasis on WD work has not gone. A new direction is now required and members are actively discussing this.

A new dimension to the work of WD has been achieved through their participation in the Rural Communities Trust. This trust is



Mrs Val Tarrant (second from left, seated), representing the ACWW at the International Federation of Agricultural Producers Pacific Basin Conference in New Zealand.

Mrs J. Roberts, Mrs E. Rose and Mrs V. Tarrant with Mrs B. Stevens (second to right) of the Associated Country Women of the World.

committed to restore as much as possible a quality of life to deprived communities by way of funding for essential services and amenities. WD is represented by Val Tarrant who is a trustee. Membership of the trust consists of commercial enterprises involved in the rural community and interested individuals. The main aim is to give preference to applications from families with special needs or difficulties and in 1984 they provided home help for two days a week for a family with a handicapped child requiring regular medical attention and assistance to another family to provide a hoist for a muscular dystrophy child, to enable him to attend school. Not only does the trust help, but advises where the applicants can obtain help. Over 20 grants were distributed in 1984.

By expanding into other avenues the principles of WD are recognised and given the importance they deserve. An invitation to provide a suitable member as a trustee shows the regard in which WD is held. Membership of Rural Communities Trust is an extension of the housekeeping and philanthropic work undertaken by WD and reaches a greater number in rural society. Those who would not have necessarily approached a women's group could feel happier approaching an anonymous trust, thereby obtaining help so badly needed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WDFF is not only concerned with furthering its own aims through its own organisation but is vitally concerned with all aspects of rural life, throughout New Zealand and the world, and to this end they cooperate with many organisations. Internally their major area of cooperation is with Federated Farmers, Country Women's Institute and Young Farmers Club, who form the consortium of rural organisations within New Zealand, offering assistance to those residing in country areas. All these groups are concerned with improving the lifestyle of rural dwellers. As a senior partner WDFF was actively involved in setting up the Country Girl's Club which evolved from the early Junior branches of WD. In the late 1970s, in answer to changing attitudes, the Country Girl's Club merged with YFC, thereby involving young people with common interests from both rural and urban areas. WD still retains an active interest in the younger members of rural society and still has representation at national level and attends their council meetings.

As their name implies WDFF was to be the women's division of FF and as such has representation at National and Provincial level. Many WD branches in fact, owe their financial start to the local FF branches who could see the advantage of having the women working with them. It is a pity that not all Provincials of FF accept this ideal but they are the poorer for it. Though during the past 60 years the two national organisations have worked together to promote the welfare of rural society, and are still doing so today, it is perplexing that at some local levels there is still little contact and understanding.

Cooperation with their sister organisation, CWI, has been achieved through co-ordinating committees which are responsible for the promotion of closer relationships. Over the years amalgamation has been

aired many times but has always been defeated, with the WD membership acknowledging that though both organisations are rural based, they have different concepts thereby creating their own identities, an identity the members wished to retain. Where there is common ground the two groups cooperate with one another. Much of this cooperation takes the form of lectures, courses or demonstrations of skills common to all, with the expertise being provided for by the continuing education sectors of the universities. Though there is cooperation there is also a rivalry which is healthy as it keeps both organisations vital.

Not only is WDFF involved in local or national concerns but it is also involved in international organisations encompassing rural societies, the foremost of these being ACWW (Associated Countrywomen of the World) and Pan Pacific Women's Association, the women's organisation of the Pacific region. This latter group was established in 1930 with New Zealand forming a branch in 1931. Aims of the association was to enable developed countries to bring their knowledge of child and maternal welfare work to the aid of the underprivileged of the Pacific. WD has been providing assistance where they can, and channelling this through the local women's groups in the islands, who have requested support. In recent years this organisation has expanded to include South-East Asian countries. The concerns of the forums held by Pan Pacific, ranged over a full gambit of subjects such as, the traffic in arms, population pressures, education, health, housing and peace. In 1955 Mrs Winn Elliott said of Pan Pacific 'That we are advancing in international understanding and cooperation and may look forward to the future with hope'. This premise has always been foremost in any international dealings between constituent members. Pan Pacific has been over-shadowed in the last decade by PSEAW (Pacific and South East Asian Women) and many of the concerns originally serviced through Pan Pacific are now channelled through ACWW.

ACWW is the international forum which WD is most actively involved in at present. It reflects the domestic concerns such as the promotion of home economics, health, education, consumer information, home help and the encouragement of agriculture and agricultural development. To facilitate its work ACWW is divided into Areas and it is the responsibility of each area to primarily assist those in need within that region, with the developed countries assisting

the under-developed ones. New Zealand is part of the South Pacific Area and plays a very active role in the southern Pacific. Assistance is given in many ways such as provision of training in leadership so that the local women can then impart their knowledge to their compatriots in the villages, by the provision of materials to help improve their lifestyles, or to maintain an existence which has been threatened. The provision of coconut palms to replant plantations destroyed by cyclones is one very practical method of assistance, as was the provision of seeds for home vegetable gardens after crops had been storm damaged. Through training schemes the women are helped to use their existing resources to better advantage, something which is very well illustrated in the South Pacific Commission Training Centre in Suva, where proficiency is gained in the use of basic equipment. For example good nutrition and cooking is taught over an open fire, then kerosene cooker, wood burning stove and finally the electric stove. The students have to learn to sew a garment by hand before progressing to a treadle sewing machine. In 1985 WD assisted this by providing over 200 sewing kits fully equipped and easy to carry for the use of instructors when teaching in the villages. They were distributed throughout the Pacific. Members will also keep these kits stocked, providing an ongoing project. The use of native foods and resources is stressed, a very practical training. ACWW sponsors students to this commission as well as providing training in constituent countries through the Elsie Zimmern Awards. New Zealand has hosted a number of these women.

Though WDFF has been a constituent member of ACWW since 1934, it is only in the past 15 years that grassroots interest in international concerns has really flourished. Prior to this the membership answered Dominion Councils' calls for assistance when required, and supported Pennies for Friendship which provides three-quarters of the administrative costs of ACWW. They do not appear to have placed international concerns high on their lists of priorities. Branches took part in international days which were designed to be the culmination of study of a nominated country; they have a speaker who informs the members of the country under study. Occasionally members would be actively involved by producing scrapbooks for dispatch to the country under study, such as to Iraq in 1984. Provincial's International Days are an important date on the calendar with branches entering into the occasion with costumes, music and food illustrating the

country. The final event each year is International Night at Conference, a night which in yesteryears was considered to be a free night but this resurgence in international concerns has shown a dramatic rise in attendance at these evenings. Not only is this support showing a change in attitudes but so is the form in which aid is given. The organisation wants to ensure that only positive forms of aid are supplied and that when required repairs and maintenance can be carried out. This is borne out by one of the latest projects carried out by the AWDFF, that of support for the United Nations Decade of Clean Water and Sanitation. Over $12,000 has been raised since 1982 to provide essential equipment to find and maintain water resources. Ten shovels, soil testing kits, 12 pumps and two wells, Riwaka and Ararata, have been supplied. But WD are so concerned that these are utilised well, that monies have been put aside to finance an essential accompanying education programme which is very necessary if the women, who will have the responsibility of the equipment, are going to have the knowledge and expertise to repair it.

Though concerned basically with the Pacific other regions are not forgotten. In 1984, the International Officer, Val Tarrant, was pleased to report that 11,451 peggy squares had been sent to Zambia in an answer to a call for woollen blankets. Wool is scarce in that country. Members were advised not to sew the squares into blankets as these rarely reached their destination. A resident in a home for the elderly sewed the squares into baby's blankets, and she had sewn over 1,000 blankets.

A recently established trust to help to provide suitable training opportunities for students in the South Pacific region, in the sphere of homemaking leadership and education, is that of the Barbara Wood Memorial Trust. Barbara Wood, a former President of CWI, met her death in 1979 in the Erebus crash. Barbara was Deputy World President of ACWW. The co-ordinating committee felt that this form of commemoration was an appropriate way to mark her life's work. Anna Maria Fisher, the first recipient is one of nine children and the grant enables her to attend St John's College in Fiji. A special grant has been given to the Area Vice President to be used in the South Pacific. This allows her to give immediate aid as she feels necessary. Funds for the Trust have come from all over the Pacific and London. The trustees hope to be able to distribute larger grants in the future but are reliant on the interest earned from investment.

International Night at Annual Conference, Auckland 1983, with Mrs Howard, Mrs Tarrant, Mrs Roberts and Mrs McPherson.

Annual Conference in Dunedin, 1980.

An ongoing project supported by all members of ACWW is Save the Sight Campaign, with monies being raised to support teams working in the Pacific, Africa, Asia and India.

Why this growth in world concerns has emerged can be linked to active fostering of international affairs, better information, clearer definition of goals and a greater control over aid which is given. This global awareness is also heightened by television and its immediacy. By contribution to ACWW projects WD members are reacting in a humanitarian way which reflects their own beginnings.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Members of WDFF come from diverse cultural backgrounds and the early membership was no different, with the membership consisting of ladies who were country bred and reared and who had quite often never left the area, to the urban born and educated woman who married into the rural sector. Owing to economic and social circumstances not many rural girls would have received further education in the first decades of the twentieth century. This societal attitude which discouraged education of women, above the basic reading-writing level, was very strong in rural communities. As always there were exceptions to this but those were in the minority. In the formative years of Division it appears that the latter group, that of the imported educated woman, were more prominent in office bearing positions. These ladies were felt to have had more experience in decision-making than the local women and therefore more competent. Though many rural women were actively involved in farming very few were actually involved in the major decisions affecting the operation of the farm. Dominion Council membership even in the 1950s reflected this reliance on the educated woman, as three-quarters of the women were former school teachers.

Branch level also reflected this trend as many of the office bearers were quite often the woman who had formerly been a school teacher or nurse. Longtime rural residents showed a lack of self- confidence, or hesitancy, in their own abilities, that they elected these more experienced women. This reticence took a long time to overcome and it probably owed its fading to the encouragement given within the branch to those women who originally had not felt confident in accepting office. This rise in self-confidence can also be attributed to the growing awareness of these women in their own potential gained through

greater participation in branch affairs as well as an improvement in the educational and employment opportunities which arose after World War II. Without this input from urban or professional women who had married farmers, many branches quite possibly would have faltered in their early years.

Reasons for joining the organisation were many and varied ranging from the simple factor 'that there was nothing else for them in the district' to 'it was the usual thing to belong to district organisations', but prominent was the 'need for company'. It was this final reason, that of the need to meet with other, which initially brought the women together once a month. This was an outing which many went to extraordinary lengths to attend. Women walked up to five miles pushing a pram, travelled on tractors, drays or in buggies. Members even made overnight stays to enable attendance. Branches were established at midway points to make gathering easier, such as in the Marlborough Sounds and at crossroads in back country districts. To encourage members to demonstrate their skills, monthly competitions were held and these covered a wide range of home-making activities. Women were inordinately proud of their home-making skills and liked showing their successes.

Just how relevant the organisation was to the women's role in the rural community is reflected in the memories of the early members and this relevance is still applicable to the 1980s. Women considered that the meeting of a group of individuals within the district was important in providing contact which could have been very awkward otherwise. This form of contact was casual as it only occurred monthly but it gave the women a purpose which many of the farmers were prepared to accept. To be able to take part meant so much to the women who joined that meetings were well attended. The individual branch membership did not have to be large. It was the enthusiasm of those taking part which was important. Many new skills and ideas were shown at these monthly meetings and it was here that many women first came in contact with the new home aids which were gaining prominence such as electrical appliances. Farmers were just starting to install electricity firstly to the milking shed and then to the home.

Belonging to WD brought an awareness of the hardships and handicaps of rural life and helped provide answers as to how these could be overcome. The concerns which manifested themselves in 1926 are

still there but with possibly different emphasis. A member of long-standing when reviewing her 50 years involvement with WDFF said: 'The work of WD is still applicable for the watchful eye it keeps on the amenities offered our country women and children, and its voice can add weight to all other organisations in their efforts to protect the farming community by continuing to be a watchdog on legislation, as it applies to country dwellers, and fighting for the right of our children to receive an adequate education to compete in today's world. All the while mindful of the need to have medical services readily available and forever striving towards recognition of the need for a dignified old age for the growing number of senior citizens.'

Many women have contributed to the work of WD throughout 60 years, too many to enumerate. Every member has contributed something and many have filled their lives with the work of the Division, voluntarily giving their time and energies to promote and sustain the work of the organisation, working quite often without national recognition but recognised at provincial and branch level. Others have presented, or had presented in their memories, trophies and prizes with competitions run annually at branch, provincial or national level. An example of such a cup is the Cora Wilding Cup which is awarded for the best essay on an international topic nominated by Dominion Council. This cup was first competed for in 1953 when it was a speech contest. In 1957 the first essay was set and has ranged over such diverse subjects as the work of the World Health Organisation in S.E. Asia; the influence of a universal language of international relations; the place of overseas aid in the emergence of S.E. Asia; what form of aid or assistance should New Zealand be offering to S.E. Asia and Korean cultures and communities. The winner has the trophy awarded to her at Conference where she reads her essay.

Other trophies which the members compete for are the Honor O'Neill Trophy for the best President's report, the Olive Craig Trophy for the best Secretary, the Val Tarrant Debating Bell for an inter-provincial competition, and the Janet Roberts Trophy awarded to the best Housekeeping Secretary. These trophies are all awarded at the annual conference.

A number of very able women have been involved with the publication of the organisations own magazine *Countrywoman*. This has taken many forms with 'Martha's' page in the *Farmer's Weekly* publication having faltered a number of times through the past 60

years but it has always resurfaced. It is important for the organisation to have a magazine reflecting the members views.

Cookery books have featured prominently in WDFF history with the first book being published in 1930. Along with these have been three books or booklets closely involving WDFF. *Brave Days* was a book published to commemorate the pioneer women, as part of the New Zealand Centennial celebrations. *And So We Grew*, celebrated WD's 25 years; this publication was quite extensive. *Service Simply Given* was a paraphrase of the organisations involvement with the local and wider community.

To name women individually would mean that someone would be forgotten so it will be left to the former Presidents of WDFF to record their messages:

NELLIE W. B. SCHRODER, MBE — 1954–57
It is a salutary experience to stand aside and view objectively the achievements of 60 years of social service with the WDFF. Disappointments as well as success have travelled with the projects, planned always with high hopes for the betterment of rural life. In the opinion of Henry Ford 'History is bunk', but having been closely involved in all but the first three years of WD history, I am glad that it has been itemised and hope that it will stand as a memorial to all those thousands of countrywomen, who immersed in the Division spirit have proved that this history at least, is anything but humbug but rather the story of 'service simply given'.

MURIEL EASTWOOD,MBE, JP — 1957–60
A Diamond Jubilee! A time to reflect on so many things. Our beginnings, ideals and accomplishments over those 60 years — all in the interests of our fellow rural women and their families.

Times of peace and war, triumph and tribulation, when women with great vision, much courage and dedication led our organisation. We remember them with pride and pay tribute to their memory. In taking up the challenge for the days ahead may we remember that 'Education is a loan to be repaid by the gift of self'.

M. E. IRWIN — 1963–66
The Diamond Jubilee 1985, of the Women's Division of Federated Farmers of New Zealand, marks another very important milestone in the history of the organisation. Sixty years have passed since the

formation of WDFU as it was then known, by a dedicated group of farmers' wives who had gathered in Wellington at the time of the Annual Conference of the Farmers' Union. Due to their vision, courage and faith, sound foundations were laid for a new organisation — one that has stood the test of time.

When members gather at Rotorua in June 1985, they will reminisce, renew old friendships, and express gratitude and appreciation for all that has been achieved during the last 60 years. Nearing the completion of my term of office, members approved unanimously of the purchase of an adjacent property, which now serves as Headquarters WDFF. This purchase enable the previous Headquarters to be converted to Clubrooms and now known as Honda-Agnus Bennett Memorial Clubrooms. Tribute was thus paid to the late Dr Agnus Bennett, OBE, for her great generosity to WDFF.

I look back on my term with profound gratitude in being elected to that high office, and will forever treasure my association with all members, and for the lasting friendships made.

I conclude in the words of Emerson 'What is so great as friendship?'

JESSIE K. LEES, MBE — 1966–69

Congratulations Mrs Luxton on deciding to write a book on the history of WDFF. This is a wonderful organisation to which I, in common with many other women, have been very proud to be a member. This organisation has tried to live up to its aim of helping women living in our country and particularly in areas far from cities and the companionship of many other women. Long may there be a WDFF and women who are willing to give their time and their talents to it.

JEAN A. SMITH, BEM — 1969–72

Congratulations on attaining 60 wonderful years of fellowship — working together, caring for and helping others, broadening our horizons through the Associated Country Women of the World.

Women's Division of Federated Farmers has given great opportunities and assistance to many.

Coming together is the beginning
Keeping together is progress
Thinking together is unity
Working together is success

May we all be inspired with the 'Sparkle' of Diamonds for our future progress.

BRIDIE BRYANT, OBE, JP — 1972–75

It gives me much pleasure to write this message on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the Women's Division Federated Farmers of New Zealand (Inc). I was privileged to have been Dominion President for the Golden Jubilee celebrations in June 1975, and this to me was one of the highlights of my term of office 1972–1975.

The raising of $30,000 for Research into Leptospirosis, the Golden Jubilee School Bursary, plus the donation of an annual prize to the Correspondence School, the naming of our own *Madam President Rose*, the donation of the O'Neill Trophy by Mrs Honora O'Neill, and the *Survey of Rural Women* were some of the outstanding achievements undertaken that year. The WDFF has become known throughout the world through our affiliation to the Associated Country Women of the World. Having recently attended the Sixth South Pacific Regional Conference of ACWW held in Christchurch and presided over by Area Vice President Miss J. A. Smith, BEM, made me more aware of the outstanding contribution made by our members of goods and money to provide better facilities for women and families in developing countries, and I would recommend that members continue to support projects sponsored by ACWW. In extending warmest congratulations to our Dominion President Mrs E. N. McInnes and all fellow members in supporting the aims and objects of our organisation and especially in this Decade of Women I am personally feeling proud and privileged of being a member of such a worthwhile and forward thinking organisation. To me it has opened many doors in furthering my education and I have received much joy in the wonderful friendships I have made and may I conclude

Friendship is a chain of gold,
Shaped in Gods all perfect mould,
Each link a laugh, a smile, a tear,
A grip of the hand, a word of cheer.

NOEL M. WELLS, MBE, QSJM — 1975–78

Congratulations Members on the attainment of the Diamond Jubilee.

How well you have all carried out the main Object of the Organisation — 'Service' whether it be to the country, the home, the community, the school, or the church. With such dedication, nothing but the highest commendation can be given.

Over the past 60 years we have achieved tremendous improvements

in the rural sector. We have been instrumental in securing better and more adequate bus services for rural school children and with the Correspondence School Parents' Association have pressed for more adequate boarding allowances and bursaries. Better broadcasting hours for children's lessons and for teachers to visit children in remote areas. School Dental Clinics are monuments to the persistent agitation of members in their respective areas. Communication in our rural areas has always been a concern, embracing roading, reticulation of power, country library service, the emergency housekeeping scheme, the establishment of club rooms and holiday homes.

We work in close liaison with Federated Farmers and have made joint submissions to Government relating to all rural services. During my term as President the appeal for funds to enable research to be made into Leptospirosis at Massey College was begun. The survey on the Rural Women of New Zealand was also launched — the first survey of its kind to be accomplished. This was carried out by the voluntary efforts of the members.

Another achievement was the knitting of thousands of 100 percent pure woollen singlets for babies — to combat the Cold Baby Syndrome. Packs of three singlets plus a pamphlet of washing instructions and a pattern for knitting singlets were presented to expectant mothers all over New Zealand. This project had the highest commendation from the Plunket Society. Members are continuing with this project.

In the years that lie ahead may the members achieve in every challenge that they accept.

VAL TARRANT, MBE — 1978–81

As we join together to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee, I welcome the opportunity to offer my congratulations on the growth and the achievements of the organisation during the past 60 years. The most important of which must surely be to have survived — thrived and to still be relevant in today's society.

May the WDFF continue to provide an effective voice for rural women in the years ahead, and may our organisation encourage these same women to develop and extend their natural skills and talents, so that they may be introduced into many new and exciting areas of social and administrative change.

But above all, as we celebrate this important milestone in our

organisation's history, let us remember with gratitude those pioneer women who first saw the need for an organisation such as ours, and were responsible for its formation,.

May the courage and determination with which they faced the challenges of the day continue to inspire us, so that we in turn may continue to accept the challenges of the 1980s and beyond with the same courage, sincerity and pride, but above all with the inspiration of the past 60 years always before us.

In this way we are not likely to forget that —

Theirs was the inspiration
Ours the inheritance.

May we continue to invest wisely and well in the future.

CHAPTER NINE

WDFF is celebrating 60 years of existence, but will it reach the century. This question is being very seriously looked at in 1985 after the results of a survey undertaken by the Dominion Executive showed that the majority of members were in the over 50 age group. No organisation which wishes to survive can afford this imbalance. There are so many other avenues for rural women in the 1980s that WDFF must meet the challenge and needs. Members have always met challenges and conquered them without massive outside support. New organisations such as Women in Agriculture (WAG) are filling the practical need of the modern rural woman, but doing it wholly on government provided monies. For a voluntary organisation to survive then, a revaluation of the options available needs to be undertaken.

Not to be left behind, Dominion Council in 1984–85 enlisted the aid of the New Zealand Futures Trust and with WDFF's permission the followng report is used to illustrate the possible avenues of changes that members of WDFF will be discussing and voting on. For future survival it is important to have a vital, topical organisation.

'Looking Ahead' is what the New Zealand Futures Trust is all about. Professor James Duncan, Chairman of the Trust and J. R. Williams, a business consultant, discussed this topic at a recent meeting with some of our Councillors.

A truism borne out by every experience is that social organisations such as WDFF come into being in response to their founders' perceptions of the social needs of their times. That these needs will change as societies change is equally evident. To remain relevant to the needs of the changing society organisational goals and policies must therefore always be subject to constant review. The alternative is to risk obsolescence and eventual decline and decay.

Are the goals and policies of WDFF *right* to meet the needs of our members and those whom we serve today? What major changes in our communities can be preseen in the years lie just ahead? Should we be planning to redirect some of our efforts and resources to meet new and emerging needs? If so, what do we need to do?

These questions were put to James Duncan and me during a pleasantly informal meeting with a group of your Councillors in Wellington a few weeks ago. (Professor Duncan is the former Chairman of New Zealand's Commission for the Future and founder-Chairman of the New Zealand Futures Trust, whose work in leading research and public discussion on options for the future of New Zealand is condensed into a book of that title recently published by A.N.Z. Book Company of Takapuna, Auckland. My experience in the fields of organisational planning and development has been large acquired in the business section and in Government.)

To such questions, futurists tend to reply, paradoxically enough, that there is no such thing as 'the future' only futures. Which of the possibilities will be realised depends not a little on the choices we make — which in turn depend on our values — and also on our taking an active, rather than a passive role. The paradox is that under conditions of uncertainty one has to make choices, and then endeavour to make things happen, rather than leave them alone in the hope that all will turn out for the best. Farmers facing the decline of traditional markets and the need to diversify are only too conscious of this!

Having said this, it was natural that our discussion should turn to some of the changes that will increasingly impact on our rural communities as this century draws to its close. Among these, the research of James Duncan and others indicates that we can foresee an economy marked by continuing recession or near-recession well into the 1990s at least; rising transport costs (dramatically so in the 1990s) and demographic changes towards our ageing population and an increased proportion of non-Europeans (one in four of those under the age of 15 in the next 30 years). Greater diversification of farm products and more intensive land use will be a feature, with some shifts in the pattern of 'urban drift'.

On the positive side, new communications technology will include the wider use of tele-conferencing (attending meetings without leaving home) and instant access to national or international data-bank or medical, legal, educational and other professional or technical advisory services. Coupled with the use of home or personal computers many services now requiring travel to towns will also be available at home, including medical services such as kidney dialysis, cancer chemotherapy and intravenous feeding. Computer-based home businesses and job responsibilities conducted from home (the 'electronic cottage') will become more commonplace as we enter the twenty-first century, now only 15 years away.

The second phase of our discussion with your Councillors dealt with the ways in which such patterns of social change are integrated into business plans and the planning of major social agencies. James Duncan outlines the technique of 'cross-impact analysis' which examines the implications

of alternative likely scenarios as a basis for policy formulation and I was able to supplement this with examples of other complementary approaches. Essentially, however, we suggested that forward planning always seeks out answers to four major questions, irrespective of the type of organisation involved: What business are we really in? Where are we now? Where do we want to go? What will we have to do to get there?

The first of these questions is crucial. My favourite example is the Hollywood film industry, which for 50 years defined its business as 'making and showing films for cinema audiences' only to fall from its former heights with the advent of television. Had it redefined its business as 'providing entertainment through the medium of film' it would have been more alert to the implications of the new technology and perhaps reacted in time.

The periodic re-examination of aims and purposes in the light of changing circumstances is fundamental to sound organisational planning.

The second question, in corporate planning terms, entails a really searching analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation (internal audit) and of the threats (for example, declining membership) and opportunities (needs for new services, more effective means of delivery of services, etc) in the outside world — environmental audit!

The third question involves the examination of alternative scenarios, selection of the most likely scenario over an agreed time span (say, 20 years on) and the determination and strategies and action places. The fourth question is, of course, a reminder that plans are really only pieces of paper until people translate them into action.

Initiating a planning cycle in these times is not easy, but the rewards can be great, bringing fresh life and vigour to the organisation even as the process gets under way. Policies that once seemed intractable are often diminished by their exposure and new instructives, perhaps stifled by the pressures of day-by-day work have a chance to be tested and tried. (Recent surveys of business firms here and elsewhere show that those with futuristic long-term planning procedures are more energetic and motivated and consistently perform better than those which rely more on ad hoc measures of a reactive rather than proactive kind.)

Social organisations are not usually pressured by marked realities as business firms are, but this may be one reason why so many seem to lose momentum in mid-life and enter a period of long-term decline. From another perspective, it may only be when the struggles of infancy and adolescence are past that a mature organisation can allocate time and effort to the next, crucial, developmental task of formulating well conceived plans for its future. And in these rapidly changing times, it seems at least well to remember that 'the faster you go, the further you have to look ahead'.

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